

SCIENTIFIC ARTICLES

Author: Martin J. PASQUALETTI, Bohumil FRANTÁL

Title: The evolving energy landscapes of coal: Windows on the past and influences on the future.
pp: 228-236

Abstract: Coal energy landscapes have changed dramatically over the last decades, including geographic shifts in production and consumption, technological changes that have reduced labour demand and led to relatively new mining practices (e.g., invasive mountain-top approaches), changed economic footprints, a shutdown of capacities or a complete end of mining in many regions with massive impacts on regional and local economies, community well-being, social capital, et cetera. Then the Covid-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine have fundamentally affected the global economy, disrupted energy markets, and shattered existing estimates about development trends, challenging the progress and speed of the low-carbon energy transition and coal phase-out. This article provides a brief reflection on the changing landscapes of coal and their possible futures, and serves as an introduction to the Special Issue of Moravian Geographical Reports on "The death of coal in the energy transition? Regional perspectives".

Article history: Received 10 September 2022, Accepted 19 December 2022, Published 30 December 2022

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Title: The curse of coal or peripherality? Energy transitions and the socioeconomic transformation of Czech coal mining and post-mining regions.

pp: 237-256

Abstract: New empirical evidence regarding theories of the resource curse and regional resilience in the context of energy transitions is presented in this article. Our analysis aimed to answer the questions of what the principal differences are between coal mining and other regions in the Czech Republic, and what are the determinants of population decline, unemployment and populism as some of the key indicators of socioeconomic transformation. Unlike most current European studies focusing on NUTS2 or NUTS3 regions, we deal with data for districts (LAU1). The analysis revealed that (in aggregate) coal mining and post-mining districts are worse off in terms of air quality, population vitality, labour market and social capital indicators. It would be problematic for policy implications to consider coal mining and post-mining districts as homogenous categories, however, since there are significant inter-group and intra-group differences in most indicators. Coal mining itself and its decline did not prove to be a direct determinant of population loss, unemployment, and support for populism. The factors significantly affecting these phenomena are geographical (peripherality, urbanisation, population density) and socioeconomic (education level, business activity). In this respect, a provocative question is offered: to what extent is it effective and sustainable to economically support coal mining regions in their existing industrial production structures and population scales, and whether the current processes of reterritorialisation and depopulation can be considered a natural process. The fact that coal mining districts are at the forefront in the implementation of wind energy may be seen as positive, but it raises questions about spatial concentration, and the environmental justice of renewable energy development.

Article history: Received 1 September 2022, Accepted 10 December 2022, Published 30 December 2022

Authors: Sanda NICOLA, Serge SCHMITZ

Title: Discordant agendas on a just transition in Romanian coal mining areas: The case of the Jiu Valley.

pp: 257-269

Abstract: Despite the promises that the just transition will bring more democracy and prosperity, there are legitimate fears that, in some regions, the pre-existing inequalities will be reinforced rather than rectified. Questioning how community resilience can be stimulated prior to and during coal mining closures, this paper focuses on Jiu Valley, a coal mining region in Romania. Using empirical and action research methodologies, this case study underlines the importance of considering the level of agency and different agendas of stakeholders regarding both the vision of their common future and the timeline for implementation. The case study underlines shortcomings in implementing a just transition, including the issue of governance and mistrust towards local and national authorities, difficulties in orchestrating individual agendas to launch a collective action for the future of the region and, not least, poor information and delays of the mine closures. Concerning the hypotheses about awareness, preparedness and transition delays, this study pointed out some of the mechanisms that explain the scarce preparedness and why, both closure and transition, were repeatedly postponed. Furthermore, the research profiled the different actors and highlighted the challenges to address and roles of stakeholders to contribute to a just transition.

Article history: Received 4 January 2022, Accepted 10 October 2022, Published 30 December 2022

Authors: Franziska GÖRMAR, Nadir KINOSSIAN

Title: Industrial forever? Narratives, place identity, and the development path of the city of Zeitz, Germany.

pp: 270-287

Abstract: There is a growing interest in understanding development processes and opportunities in small and medium-size towns that so far did not attract much attention in mainstream urban theory. Conventional growth-oriented approaches fail to capture the complexity of local development and policy-making processes because they prioritise production factors and underrate the role of discourse and place-based identity. This paper aims to explore the linkages between narratives, place identity, and local development. As local actors try to make sense of a place's past and future, they select, contribute to, and mobilise various local narratives. Multiple narratives feed into and are part of a place's identity that defines a frame for possible development options. The paper uses the case of Zeitz in Saxony-Anhalt (Germany) to analyse the evolution of local development narratives from the 1970s until today. The paper concludes that: i) narrative-making is not a linear process; narratives, spatial imaginaries and local identity are complex, dynamic, and interconnected with each other; ii) local narratives help to construct a coherent imaginary of a place and are mutually intertwined with local development and policies; and iii) local narratives are interdependent with external events and strategies requiring a multiscalar relational perspective on local development processes.

Article history: Received 4 February 2022, Accepted 30 September 2022, Published 30 December 2022

Author: Charlotte Bucke, Connor Smith, Dan van der Horst

Title: Decarbonising suburbia: Homeowners' perspectives on home retrofits and travel mode shift in Perth, Scotland.

pp: 288-310

Abstract: Suburban neighbourhoods pose challenges to decarbonisation, due to high car-dependency and relatively large and energy inefficient homes. Home ownership dominates suburbia, thus putting responsibility on households to adopt measures to decarbonise their domestic lives and transportation. This paper examines household perspectives on the feasibility of such measures. We ran a survey and focus groups in Perth (Scotland) during the energy crisis.

Whilst we found high levels of concern about climate change, energy costs, and growing engagement with cleaner technologies (e.g. heat pumps), most residents felt decarbonisation options were limited. Barriers like technologies' up-front costs, worsened with the cost of living crisis. Participants had low familiarity with sharing economy approaches like car clubs. Despite high (non-electric) bike ownership and prevalence of storage space (garages), cycling was more perceived as a leisure activity than a regular transport mode. There were shared views that the state should take a stronger role in coordinating and implementing systemic changes required for energy transition, including measures affecting residents directly, like reducing car traffic into the city centre. We conclude that despite the economic privilege of high home and car ownership in suburbia, few felt financially able to decarbonise and most seem locked into high-carbon suburban lifestyles.

Article history: Received 10 October 2022, Accepted 21 November 2022, Published 30 December 2022

Authors: Justyna CHODKOWSKA-MISZCZUK, Sylwia KUZIEMKOWSKA, Pramit VERMA, Stanislav MARTINÁT, Agata LEWANDOWSKA

Title: To know is to accept. Uncovering the perception of renewables as a behavioural trigger of rural energy transition.

pp: 311-323

Abstract: Our research aims to reflect on rural communities' awareness and perceptions of various energy sources, particularly focusing on renewable energies. We argue that there is an urgent need to expand the knowledge base on the perspectives of rural communities directly and indirectly affected by renewable energy installations. From an empirical point of view, our study focuses on the Lipno county in the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship (Poland), where a relatively unique constellation of renewable energy and local community is emerging. Our findings indicate a wide awareness about renewable energies in the community, but a rather shallow, imbalanced, and outdated knowledge on potentials, advantages and disadvantages of individual locally available renewable energy sources was detected. To break deeply rooted carbon dependency and lock-in and to trigger mechanisms of change leading to more sustainable futures, practical, contextual, and place-based knowledge is essentially needed to shape responsive attitudes. We claim that personal experience of the effects of renewable energy installation (especially small-scale ones) can be a proxy for the change and scaling up. This is a key because it proves the leading role of an inclusive approach to developing renewable energy in rural areas. Locals undertake new energy investments, which is the basis of spatial (territorial) distribution justice – they not only bear the costs of operating new energy installations but also derive tangible benefits from renewables.

Article history: Received 15 October 2022, Accepted 10 December 2022, Published 30 December 2022

Authors: Marina FROLOVA, Belén PÉREZ-PÉREZ, Daniel HERRERO-LUQUE

Title: Diverse responses of coastal communities to offshore wind farming development in Southern Spain.

pp: 324-339

Abstract: Despite having one of the fastest rates of wind power growth in Europe, offshore wind power development in Spain has been relatively slow. One of the factors affecting its deployment is strong local opposition. In this paper, we explore the main factors affecting local perceptions of offshore wind farms in the coastal regions of Southern Spain. We also compare local opinions of on-land and offshore farms, their impacts on local landscapes/seascapes, and their compatibility with local practices and values. To this end, a multi-phase research approach was applied, based on several stages of data collection and analysis and on surveys conducted between 2012 and 2022. Our study shows that the conflicts surrounding offshore wind farms are linked to the perception of the sea and the wind as important local resources and the perceived right of the coastal region to use these resources to generate wealth for their communities. The coastal

communities' values, perceptions, and practices regarding the sea have a fundamental influence on their opinions. Our research indicates that local people are more likely to accept offshore wind farms if they provide socioeconomic benefits for their communities and if joint use of marine resources can be guaranteed.

Article history: Received 12 September 2022, Accepted 10 November 2022, Published 30 December 2022